10: Marshall M-S (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

615 bathe in the *longyi* then draw a dry one over the wet one which they drop down underneath, thus making the change publicly but modestly without exposing the person. The wet garment is then soused in water and the laundry work is done.

VIII

INTELLECTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

181 155 771 152 The Karens, as was said of the people of Borneo, "are not inferior but different". In their primitive state they were subject to the slavery of fear which had retarded their development. To them as to most primitive races all that is unknown is to be feared. They peopled, with all kinds of malevolent demons, the hills, the streams and the big trees, especially the banyan which is held in awe throughout the Orient probably because of its great fertility and tenacious hold on life. They were surrounded by fierce wild animals and more numerous and powerful neighbours. One of their own number aptly described his race as one that "is capable of being afraid".

This timidity has often militated against them. Because of fear they dare not speak their mind. They resort to the common "don't know" and thus hope to escape attention. They are easily thrown into a panic which disorganizes their thinking and makes them ridiculous when under the cross fire of examination or in a crisis. School-boys will not assert themselves and are often adjudged stupid when in reality they have done better daily work while plodding along than their more vocal fellows. Women are especially shy and in primitive villages will run from a stranger.

The generations through which they have been

10; Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

177 181 797 them a language that might denationalize them. But when they sought outside teachers who would instruct them in English, the missionaries agreed to carry on schools in that language, and there grew up the Anglo-Vernacular system (English combined with the vernaculars, Burmese and Karen) that reached up to the 153 871 University with its degrees. Karen students usually are slower to grasp new ideas than Burmans, but they often retain them better and have been, in proportion to their numbers, just as good students as any other race in the country. When they get over their reticence and fears they seem to be able to succeed in any endeavour for which they have the aptitude.

186 582 The Karens are often accused of being clannish. They are, but it is their natural self-interest which leads them to cling to each other for protection from their more powerful neighbours. For the same reason they condemn marriage outside the tribe.

181 152 101 Although physically the Karen seems to an outsider closely to resemble the Burman, he has many very different racial characteristics which make it difficult for the two peoples to understand each other. The Burman is much like his own national emblem, the peacock, given to show and to a great appreciation of fine feathers. He likes to do things quickly and not too thoroughly. He watches those whom he desires to please and caters to their tastes. He uses many honorifics and is diplomatic in his language and manner. He often wears a silk *longyi* of dainty colours over a body that is rough and unwashed.

The Karen wears his dirty clothes over his unwashed person and feels that the two go together. He cares nothing for personal appearance. He is abrupt in his

10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

181 language and not much given to servility. Direct in his
152 speech and with his mind easily upset by panic and timi-
101 dity, he is often what we would call impolite and very undiplomatic. He makes no effort to show himself to his best advantage but has a sort of "take it or leave it" attitude that often gets him into trouble. This makes him all the more desirous of shunning those with whom he feels that he cannot compete. This is another reason why he sought the jungles and the hills.

152 Many early writers on the Karens have described them
529 as devoid of humour. This can easily be explained when one understands the fears with which they surrounded everything. They were struck with terror by Government officers and other aggressive Europeans, with their strange appearance and ways. They did not dare to laugh for they did not understand what was supposed to be a joke. Therefore they preserved poker faces and seemed dumb and dead. The writer has spent many hours with them when the flow of humour and the joyous laughter were as spontaneous and happy as among any people he was ever with. Stories, practical jokes, wise-cracks came as quickly and merrily as in any language. But a man must have their confidence and know their language if he would enjoy himself among them.

There is a naivety among the Karens that is often very refreshing. They do not seem to be able to plot involved schemes for deceiving their neighbours. When they do attempt such things their simple plots usually fail. There is a simplicity among them that makes one feel a genuine friendliness when with them. One is usually safe in leaving one's luggage in their houses. Pedlars most often sleep at Karen houses when they can, for they

10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1/Burma
Karen AP7

feel safer there than with any other people in the country. 152 ●
When Karens are convinced of one's honesty and truth- [672]
fulness and genuine friendliness they will prove themselves
to be true friends and they will inconvenience themselves
no end to make that friendship good.

In common with some of the other Hill peoples of 633
south-eastern Asia, they have a great love for music.
Their own native music is built on the pantonic scale.
It consists of weird tunes in a minor key that are plain-
tive, sad and tremulous. They use the harp, and make 634
crude instruments resembling the violin out of bamboo,
and a kind of xylophone played with two small mallets.
The drum is also used in various forms.

The educated Karens, most of whom are Christians, 533
have almost entirely abandoned their old plaintive native 177
airs for the happier Western music. It began with the
hymns of the Christian Church of which a fine and large
collection has been translated into both the Sgaw and Pwo
languages, and which they delight to sing. In addition to
these, the young people love picking up the popular airs
sung in musicales and in the cinemas. It is not uncommon
to hear these songs even in remote villages.

During the past quarter century there has grown up
a new music among the people, mostly among the
Christians. Every Christian village has its choir. They
love to sing together. The leaders of these choirs have
taken Western airs and have combined them with touches
of their native music and composed new songs for them.
Hundreds of these have been published by mimeograph
and a few of them have shown real musical ability on the
part of their composers. The Karens have, as a rule, soft
and velvety voices that lend themselves to good music.

12: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1918) 1922 AFI Burma
Karen AFI

breast of the great bird, cooked with curry well spiced, to some of his chums. The flesh of the creature proved to be both tough and strong, and when one of the guests left the group to wash out his mouth, the host beat a hasty retreat. The other villagers, who promptly heard of the unpalatable feast, amused themselves by asking the guests how they enjoyed it.

The Karen are accustomed to say of themselves that "they put a thing in the heart." They mean by this that they hold their peace, but do not forget slights, grudges, disagreeable requests, and the like. If a Karen is asked to do something he does not want to do, he may reply with a grunt suggesting an assent, but does not comply with the request and fails to put in an appearance again soon. He does not refuse at the time, fearing to cause trouble. In the same way a slight or an insult is "put in the heart" without retort or demonstration of anger. He dissimulates and waits for his revenge. Before the British established orderly government in the country, many a raid was executed to pay off a grudge or an insult cherished in the heart. For the man of little or no influence in his village there was a secret method of vengeance, namely, by resorting to magic or to poison. It was the fear of this vengeful trait in the Karen that for years prevented the Burman subordinate officials from crossing Thaukgeyat Creek into the Toungoo Hills.

The repudiation of a friend is not unknown among the Karen, but such conduct is rare. In general, they are cautious in entering into friendships, but, having done so, are faithful and sincere to those whose confidence they accept in exchange for their own. Blood-brotherhood is a recognized institution among them, having been much more prevalent in the past than at present; and the bond signified by it in most of the Karen tribes was stronger than the ties of family. Westerners make friends more quickly than the Karen, but Western haste and impatience are not winsome qualities to the latter.

It has been said that the Karens are stubborn. They do not reach quick decisions in regard to matters novel to them and can not be forced to do so. But if given time to consider after a full explanation, they are pretty sure to return later and offer their reasons for not consenting to the proposition; and if allowed to talk the matter out, their objections being answered and time given for their consideration, they will most likely be persuaded. When thus convinced, their loyal coöperation may generally be de-

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

pended on. I have known not a few Government officials who, by such methods, have won the confidence and earnest support of the people with whom they were dealing. It is unfortunate, however, that the number of such officers is not larger. While the Karen have not always been treated with proper consideration and have sometimes failed to understand the aims and methods of the British Government, they are deeply attached to it.

It is true that the Karen are not as quick-witted as some of the other races of the Orient. Nevertheless, they are in some respects out-distancing their more facile neighbors. They excel in the routine of their daily tasks. This is observable in the schools, where the Karen boys usually take the lead in the daily recitations, but make a poorer showing in the written and oral examinations. Several Government officers have spoken in high terms of their Karen clerks, commending their faithfulness and honesty. Not infrequently it happens that such a faithful worker finds that some astute associate has gained the credit and reward that should have been his. The Karen are not blind to disappointments of this sort, as the following fable shows: A man, about to leave home, ordered his pig and dog to prepare a plot of ground for planting as a garden. The pig was industrious and rooted until he had all but finished turning over the plot, while the dog spent his time lying under a tree. Late in the afternoon, before the master's return, the dog jumped up and scratched about here and there in the soft earth. When he heard his master coming, he ran barking down the path to meet him and told him that the pig had been working but a short time, while he had been digging all day. The faithful pig, meanwhile, was so busy rooting in the farthest corner of the lot, trying to finish before his owner's return, that he knew nothing of what was going on. The credulous man believed the dog's deceitful words, killed the pig, and only discovered his mistake when it was too late. This fable is epitomized in the proverb, "The dog scratches in the pig's place." For many a Karen this is all too true.

Early writers speak of the peaceableness, honesty, and goodness of the Karen.[2] There are, of course, in every nation those who belie any statement concerning the people as a whole. However, I have no hesitation in saying that deceit and trickery are not common among the Karen. I have been told by peddlers and others, who often have to carry valuable goods and money into the jungle, that

[2] Sangermano, *Description of the Burmese Empire, 1783-1808*, (Rangoon, 1885) p. 34; Maj. Snodgrass, *The Narrative of the Burmese War*, (London, 1827) Vol. I, p. 142.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

531 of color and design is practically limited to the woven patterns of some of their garments. They have only a scant vocabulary for 531 colors. I have seldom heard them remark on the beauty of a sunset 192 or the glories of a sunrise. Sometimes they have called attention to a pleasing landscape, but I have wondered whether they were not doing so because they knew of my pleasure in such scenes.

571 The Karen is a plebeian. His manners at home are crude, al- 609 though he is not without a certain personal dignity. His shyness in the presence of strangers, especially of those whom he fears, causes him embarrassment. Under such circumstances he often impresses one as being impolite. He is not servile. It has [554] never been his custom to "shiko".[3] The greatest chief is a comrade among his men, who do not yield their self-respect in his presence. Nevertheless, the inherent timidity of the race shows itself in the avoidance of making a request in person. A request may expose the one making it to the chagrin of a refusal and the one addressed to the unpleasant necessity of giving an adverse answer. The Karen, therefore, gets a friend to act as his intermediary. Even a boy who wants to buy a book will have his classmate get it for him.

152 Amiability is another marked trait of the Karen, both of the 177 educated and the uneducated, rendering them acceptable in many 462 kinds of service. Young Karen women are in demand as nursemaids all over Burma, and not a few have gone temporarily to England and America in that capacity. They are kind, patient, and faithful in their care of the children entrusted to their care.

000 The remarkable chastity of the Karen is also worthy of notice. It has, however, been mentioned in several places in this work and perhaps need not be discussed further in this connection, except to say that the fear of the evil consequences of violating the laws of the elders has kept them free from many unhealthy customs that are found in many parts of the world.[4]

[3] "Shiko" is a Burmese word signifying the act of worship, or of showing respect to officials.

[4] See pages 139, 142, 192, 288.

19 Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

their work will not bring success. They will become sickly, weak, and helpless. 671 538 593

The virtue of humility is extolled at length, as one who knows the Karen people might expect. The people are told that he who does not humble himself but exalts himself, who regards his relatives with disdain, makes forays, is extortionate, beats others for nothing, and, in general, does as he pleases, will die young. Such a man will be punished by the Lord of heaven, losing his drums and money, being left wretched and childless, unable to work, without means to purchase anything, and to die without apparent cause. 671 538 576 571 152 789

Cursing is condemned, and its retributive consequences are shown in the story of a man who was the father of ten children and cursed one of his brethren without a reason. The curse did not harm the one on whom it was pronounced, but reacted upon the other, causing the death of every one of his children. Among the other evils denounced and forbidden are covetousness, partiality, backbiting, hatred, quarreling, falsehood, and exacting fines for the infringement of arbitrary rules or for trespass on one's property. The condemnation of such vices, as well as the encouragement of mutual helpfulness, filial piety, generosity to the needy and helpless, and fear of punishment by the Lord of heaven, show that the Karen had no mean standards of personal conduct. Whether these ideals were lived up to or not is another question. In fact, cursing a person by whom one had been injured was a recognized form of retaliation and punishment. It was necessary to go to his house, stand in front of his door, and recite certain verses imprecating him. The person venting his wrath must do this three evenings in succession, taking with him on the third evening an expiring fagot, an addled egg, and the scrapings from the dish out of which the pigs are fed. On this occasion he closes his imprecation with the words: "May his life go out like this dying fagot. May he be without posterity like this egg. May his end be like the refuse of the dishes."

Theoretically, the principle of the old Mosaic law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye was valid among the Karen, but it was tempered in the sayings of the elders as follows: "In order not to subject ourselves to fines and punishment, we must allow others to treat us as they choose. If we are struck, we must not strike again. If one strikes your head, strike the floor. If some one blinds you, do not blind him in return. The long is before; the short is behind [that is, the future is long; the past is short]. Love of 681 627 577

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

to ride when searching for the "k' las" of human beings. Any person who kills one of these animals arouses the enmity of the spirit.

The "Hti k' sa kaw k' sa," or "lords of the water and land," or "lords of the earth," are the deities who rule over the lands of the earth. They are superior to the spirits that preside over rivers and mountains and have tempers that are easily disturbed. Ill-spoken words, as well as improper and immoral actions, easily offend them; and they take vengeance on persons guilty of such misdemeanors by sending tigers, snakes, and various illnesses upon them. They are sometimes confused with the king of hades, who also passes judgment on the sins of mortals. One way to avoid angering the lords of the earth is to scrape a little rice from the top of the pot while cooking and lay it aside as an offering to them. Concerning their relation to these divinities, the people say that if they transgress in their language while in a distant land, the lords of the earth will kill them before dark; but if guilty of swearing or using indecent words in their own country, they can assuage the anger of these spirits by making an offering of rice and water at the foot of a tree and uttering the following prayer: "O Lords of the earth, we are ignorant people. Whatever transgressions we have been guilty of in using harsh or obscene words, do not, O Lords, hold them against us. We will make offerings annually. If we do not die, you shall eat of our food every year and of our children's offerings generation after generation."

Every tree, river, lake, and, indeed, almost every natural object is supposed by the Karen to be inhabited by its "k' sa" or divinity. These local spirits, however, are regarded by many as constituting lower orders of the divinities of the first group. When a man selects the location for his field, he must perform certain ceremonies to win their good will. The simplest of these is to place offerings of rice and water at the foot of some large tree in the plot chosen or to go through the ceremonies described in the chapter on Agricultural Pursuits and Other Occupations.[4] There are also the annual sacrifices to these spirits that have been described fully in the chapter on Propitiatory Sacrifices and Healing Offerings, pp. 234, ff.

The nefarious work and character of "Naw k' plaw" or "Mü kaw li" have been sufficiently revealed in the narration of the story of his temptation of the first parents of the Karen race in the

[4] See ante, pp. 76, ff.